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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000633

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SUBJECT: MAOIST ATROCITIES AGAINST CIVILIANS ON THE INCREASE

REF: (A) KATHMANDU 0604; (B) KATHMANDU 0450;

(C) KATHMANDU 0446

SUMMARY

1. (U) MAOIST ACTIVITIES HAVE TAKEN A MORE VIOLENT TURN, WITH ATROCITIES PERPETRATED AGAINST HELPLESS CIVILIANS ESCALATING BOTH IN NUMBER AND SEVERITY. REPORTS OF THE MAOISTS DECAPITATING VICTIMS OR TORTURING THEM TO DEATH WITH KNIVES IN DISTRICTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY HAVE BECOME A HEART-RENDING COMMONPLACE IN NEPAL'S MEDIA. OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS ALONE, AS DETAILED BELOW, THE MAOISTS HAVE BRUTALLY SLAIN CIVILIANS IN EACH OF NEPAL'S FIVE DEVELOPMENT REGIONS. LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO SHINE LIGHT ON THIS MOST HORRIBLE ASPECT OF THE INSURGENCY, BUT SOME OF THEIR INTERNATIONAL COUNTERPARTS ARE TO DATE APPARENTLY LESS MOVED BY THE DOCUMENTED HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES OF THE MAOISTS.

IN THE EASTERN REGION

2. (SBU) ON MARCH 21 MAOISTS ABDUCTED LEKNATH GAUTAM, A TEACHER AND MEMBER OF THE LOCAL CHAPTER OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, FROM HIS HOME IN PANCHTHAR DISTRICT. HIS BODY WAS LATER FOUND NEAR AN ABANDONED POLICE POST THAT HAD BEEN DESTROYED IN A PREVIOUS MAOIST ATTACK. THE LOCAL NGO HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE SOCIETY (HURPES) ISSUED A PRESS STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE KILLING. HURPES MEMBER KRISHNA PAHADI ALSO TOLD POLOFF THAT THE NGO HAS TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED A PROGRAM OF "PEACE" DRAMAS IN VARIOUS DISTRICTS AFTER RECEIVING THREATS FROM MAOIST SYMPATHIZERS. THE NGO HAS ALREADY HELD SUCH DRAMATIZATIONS IN 16 DIFFERENT DISTRICTS, DRAWING CROWDS OF UP TO 2,000 IN SOME LOCATIONS.

IN THE CENTRAL REGION

3. (U) A GROUP OF MAOISTS KILLED BHOLA SHAH TELI, AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE RULING NEPALI CONGRESS AT KARUNIYA IN RAUTAHAT DISTRICT ON THE NIGHT OF MARCH 22. NEPALI CONGRESS ACTIVISTS HAVE BEEN FREQUENT TARGETS OF MAOIST VIOLENCE, ESPECIALLY IN OUTLYING AREAS.

IN THE WESTERN REGION

4. (U) MAOISTS ATTACKED AND BRUTALLY KILLED RAM MANI GYAWALI, CHAIRMAN OF KERUNG VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (VDC), ARGHAKHANCHI DISTRICT, WESTERN NEPAL, ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 12. AFTER GYAWALI'S HANDS AND LEGS WERE TIED WITH A ROPE, HE WAS SLASHED WITH A KNIFE UNTIL HE DIED. TRAUMATIZED FAMILY MEMBERS STATED THAT THEY WERE DETAINED BY THE MAOISTS WITHIN EARSHOT OF THE MURDER, THROUGHOUT THE TWO AND A HALF HOUR ORDEAL. GYAWALI, WHO HAD RELOCATED TO KATHMANDU AFTER RECEIVING DEATH THREATS, HAD TEMPORARILY RETURNED TO THE VDC TO FOLLOW PROGRESS IN AN ELECTRIFICATION PROGRAM IN HIS HOME VILLAGE. THE VICTIM'S SISTER-IN-LAW, A PROGRAM SPECIALIST AT USAID KATHMANDU, CONFIRMED THE NEWS OF HIS VICIOUS SLAYING.

5. (U) THE INSURGENTS ALSO ATTACKED AND WOUNDED HARI DHAKAL, A TEACHER IN SUNWAL VDC OF NAWALPARASI DISTRICT, MARHC 14. ACCORDING TO ASSISTANT CHIEF DISTRICT OFFICER (CDO) OF NAWALPARASI, DHAKAL WAS SHOT IN THE HEAD, AND IS IN CRITICAL CONDITION. A GROUP OF MAOISTS SET FIRE TO THE HOUSE OF DEVI PRASAD NEUPANE, VICE CHAIRMAN OF CHANDRESWORE VDC OF LAMJUNG DISTRICT ON MARCH 15. NEUPANE IS A LOCAL LEADER OF THE NEPALI CONGRESS PARTY. THE DISTRICT POLICE OFFICE IN GORKHA CONFIRMED THAT MAOISTS KILLED YAM KUMARI ALE OF MANKAMANA VDC OF GORKHA DISTRICT ON MARCH 20. SHE HAD EARLIER SURRENDERED TO THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION OFFICE AND DISSOCIATED HERSELF FROM MAOIST ACTIVITY ABOUT TWO MONTHS BEFORE. IN KASKI DISTRICT, TWO FEMALE FAMILY MEMBERS OF DEVENDRA THAKURI, A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL NEPALESE ARMY, WERE KILLED AFTER MAOISTS BOMBED HIS HOUSE IN THUKMI THE NIGHT OF MARCH 26.

IN THE MID-WESTERN REGION

16. (U) IN DANG DISTRICT, A GROUP OF MAOIST INSURGENTS BEHEADED A BUS OWNER IN KAVRE VDC ON MARCH 14. HIS BODY WAS RECOVERED NEAR THE PREMISES OF THE LOCAL POST OFFICE, ACCORDING TO DANG'S ASSISTANT CDO. MAOISTS MURDERED LAL BAHADUR GHARTI, WARD CHAIRMAN OF SAHIGA VDC IN DANG DISTRICT, ON MARCH 15. DANG'S CDO DESCRIBED THE KILLING AS MERCILESS, NOTING THE DECEASED HAD SEVERAL KNIFE CUTS ON HIS NECK AND BODY. DANG DISTRICT POLICE AND CDO ALSO REPORT MAOISTS DECAPITATED SHANKAR GHARTI OF TRIBHUVAN MUNICIPALITY, DANG DISTRICT ON MARCH 19. A GROUP OF ARMED MAOISTS SHOT DEAD GANESH BAHADUR SHAHI, A DISTRICT CHAIRMAN OF NEPAL TRADE UNION CONGRESS, SURKHET DISTRICT, ON MARCH 27.

IN THE FAR-WEST

17. (U) MAOISTS KILLED PREM BAHADUR BISTA, VICE CHAIRMAN OF MANILEKH VDC IN DADELHURA DISTRICT OF THE FAR WESTERN HILL REGION, HACKING HIM TO DEATH WITH A KHUKURI KNIFE ON MARCH 14, THE SPOKESMAN OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE CONFIRMED. THE LOCAL PRESS ALSO REPORTED THAT MAOISTS STABBED TO DEATH VDC CHAIRMAN PADAM SINGH BADAL AND UDAYA SINGH DHAMI OF HIKILA VDC, DARCHULA DISTRICT, ON MARCH 16. THIS REPORT COULD NOT BE CONFIRMED THROUGH THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, AS TELEPHONE CONNECTIONS TO THAT REMOTE AREA HAVE BEEN DISRUPTED.

COMMENT

18. (SBU) MAOISTS HAVE TORTURED AND MURDERED HELPLESS CIVILIANS FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE INSURGENCY IN FEBRUARY 1996. THE MAOISTS' CAMPAIGN OF INTENSIFYING BRUTALITY TOWARD INNOCENT CIVILIANS REVEALS AS SPURIOUS THEIR CLAIM TO REPRESENT THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE COMMON PEOPLE. THE TIMING OF THE MAOIST CALL FOR A GENERAL STRIKE (REFTTEL A), COINCIDING WITH THE ALL-IMPORTANT NATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL EXAMS, REINFORCES THIS CONCLUSION. SUBODH RAJ PYAKUREL, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION INSEC, DESCRIBED THE IMPACT OF THE STRIKE AS PARTICULARLY HARMFUL, SAYING "THE ATTEMPT TO DISTURB THE EXAMINATION WITH WHICH THE FUTURE OF THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS IS LINKED, IS A CRIME BIGGER THAN MURDER." APPARENTLY UNABLE TO WIN SUPPORT FOR THEIR MOVEMENT THROUGH PERSUASION, THE MAOISTS ARE TURNING TO TERROR AND INTIMIDATION TO QUASH POPULAR OPPOSITION. WHILE MANY LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS PUBLICIZE AND PROTEST SUCH ATROCITIES, WE ARE CONCERNED BY THE COMPARATIVE LACK OF COMMENSURATE COVERAGE GIVEN MAOIST ABUSES BY INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS.

MALINOWSKI